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ABSTRACT

Over the last two decades, the co-authors of this book have worked together to build a tradition of intellectual freedom within public schools. The book describes their struggles as cultural workers, the pedagogical and legal strategies they employed, the resistance they encountered, the lessons they learned, and the impact that they have seen on the lives of the students they serve. Their story in the book brings vividly to life some of the most important questions in public education today: Do First Amendment protections apply to teachers and students in K-12? Who controls what can be read and written in schools? Is inquiry or indoctrination at the heart of schooling? and Can critical literacy survive the "machinations of shortsighted bureaucrats and board members?" Through their intertwined stories spanning nearly two decades, the authors address these questions and provide specific strategies for teachers trapped in similar circumstances. The first section of the book focuses on their work with middle schoolers during the 1980s, while in the second section, the struggle for intellectual freedom extends to student expression in school publications. Finally, in the book's third section an attempt is made to step back from personal experiences, take the long view, and see how it all adds up--for the students, for the teaching profession, and for society at large. Appended are an intellectual freedom manifesto and a list of steps teachers can take against censorship. (Contains 12 "recommended reading" selections.) (NKA)

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